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***Komkya* and the convening of a Chagga public, 1953-1961**

Abstract

In 1953, a newspaper called *Komkya* was established by the Chagga Council in northeastern Tanganyika, one of a number of district newspapers created across Tanganyika in the early 1950s. But while other district newspapers were short-lived, *Komkya* lasted until independence in 1961 and beyond. This longevity suggests that *Komkya* was more than simply a colonial tool for social development or a new Paramount Chief's means of shoring up support. Drawing on archival sources read alongside the newspaper itself, this chapter explores the ways in which *Komkya* served to convene a new Chagga public.

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<A> *Komkya* and the convening of a Chagga public, 1953-1961

In 1953, a new newspaper was born in the town of Moshi, a thriving town on the slopes of Kilimanjaro in northeastern Tanganyika. Published under the auspices of the local government body, the Chagga Council, it had its office in their new and impressive council buildings. The newspaper was called by the Chagga-language word *Komkya*, rendered into English as “Chagga Dawn”. It was conceived in part as an element of the nation-building project of a newly-elected Paramount Chief of the Chagga, Thomas Marealle. But as a district newspaper published in Swahili, the *lingua franca* of the Trusteeship Territory of Tanganyika, it was also inscribed in a late colonial project, part of a wider set of social development initiatives closely tied to the development efforts of the “second colonial occupation”.¹

Historians would once not have paused long over a local government newspaper like *Komkya*, and from this short description we can already begin to see why. For a long time, historians have tended to focus more on what newspapers *ought* to have done than on what they actually did. When historians first began to write the history of newspapers in Africa, they did so in search of the roots of anti-colonial nationalism. Their attention was drawn to the oppositional voices in African newspapers, and particularly to the lively anti-colonial press which emerged in West Africa from the late 1930s.² Newspapers operating within the framework of the colonial state could not and did not adopt an openly anti-colonial stance, and as such drew less attention. At the same time, a second body of literature, concerned with the roots of civil society and driven by contemporary concerns with the development of an independent critical press, has similarly found less to say about newspapers that were run under the auspices of government, whether local or national, and that did not see themselves as existing in opposition to government.³

More recently, historical writing about newspapers has returned to the question of the nation, but from a different perspective. For some years, historical writing about newspapers in the colonial world has been both inspired and restricted by a framework proposed by Benedict Anderson, first in his book *Imagined Communities* and in his later work, *Spectre of Comparison*. For Anderson, the modern world is defined by a new form of collective consciousness, that of the nation. He asks the important question of how the nation came to be understood as normal, as not only *a* politically thinkable form of legitimate community but as the only politically thinkable form of legitimate community. This is a story that has print capitalism, the newspaper and the novel, at its heart. Of central importance is the concept, borrowed from Walter Benjamin, of “homogenous, empty time”, in which readers of newspapers are brought together as a community through the shared ritual of reading a daily newspaper.⁴ It is this simultaneity that “allows one to imagine a limited sovereign community

beyond face-to-face relations as well as to envision other limited sovereignties besides one's own as equivalent.”⁵

Anderson's thinking about the nation offers radical possibilities for rethinking the universalisation of the national form in the modern world. Yet it is not clear that it ought to frame our readings of late colonial newspapers. One problem is empirical. In many parts of the world, daily newspapers were exceptional; more common were weekly or monthly newspapers, which might reach their readers' hands days or even months after their original publication. This is not the realm of homogenous empty time.

But a deeper problem is that Anderson's model relies on an understanding of the nation as the “dominant framework of collective life”.⁶ He wrote both *Imagined Communities* and *Spectre of Comparison* in the late twentieth century, at a time when it seemed that national identity had indeed come to dominate the collective consciousness. Explaining this process was the problem which Anderson sought to solve. Yet from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, at a greater critical distance from the nationalist movements whose self-serving histories were once accepted as truth, it is no longer so clear that nationalism *has* come to dominate the collective consciousness in the way that Anderson thought he identified. Older and newer forms of connection and understandings of legitimate authority, defined by religion, or heredity, are powerful and tenacious. And therefore, as Karin Barber suggests, the new collective subjectivities created through print were just as likely to be smaller or larger than the nation. As Barber writes, “[t]he role of print (and subsequently the electronic media) in the constitution of a *national* imagined community was only one strand in a history that included the simultaneous consolidation of local ethnic and other identities and the imagining of supra-national communities”.⁷

But print was not only a vector in the creation and consolidation of new forms of identity. As Tony Ballantyne has recently argued in another context, “[o]ur abiding preoccupation with the story of the nation has been a key factor in encouraging cultural and intellectual historians to invest considerable energy into producing histories of identities like ‘Maori’, ‘settler’ or ‘Pakeha’, and ‘New Zealander’”.⁸ Historians have often explored the production of these identities through print culture. But if print served to create identity, it did much else besides. Print also created new spaces for virtual exchange in which new kinds of networks were created. The networks constituted by and through print were contingent, fragile and unstable, but nonetheless played a critical role in forging the intellectual worlds of late colonialism.

Analytically, one way into exploring these networks is through the concept of the “public”. In a 1992 article, the literary theorist Michael Warner describes a particular type of public constituted through and in relation to texts. This type of public is neither an all-encompassing

socially-defined group or “social totality”, such as ‘the state’, nor a bounded group such as an audience united to watch a performance, but rather a public “that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation”.⁹

My concern here is therefore not with the creation of new identities, but rather the creation of new publics through print. To this end, this chapter explores a newspaper, *Komkya*, whose importance lay not in its role as a tool of identity formation or as the cultural or political project of a named person, though some initially hoped it would play that role. Rather, as one of a new genre of district newspapers which became an important part of the newspaper landscape in 1950s Tanganyika, *Komkya* served to call a new public into being, one which was both bounded and unbounded, unitary and segmented.

To make this argument, I start by outlining the local history of this newspaper, *Komkya*, before setting it in a wider context of district newspapers in late colonial Tanganyika. I then offer a reading of the public it served to create, before concluding with some reflections on what this case study might suggest for our understanding of newspapers in late colonial Africa, and the wider intellectual history of late colonial Africa.

 Komkya as a political project

Komkya appeared for the first time in March 1953 as a monthly newspaper.¹⁰ The cost was twenty shillings, a typical price for such newspapers, and it was also available by post for thirty shillings.¹¹ Announcements and advertisements were welcome, at a cost of twenty pence per word. Letters and news items could be sent to the editor and each issue contained at least one full page of letters from readers.

In many ways, and as we shall see in more detail later on, *Komkya* was typical of the many district and provincial newspapers established in the early 1950s in Tanganyika. It was published by the Chagga Council, just as other local newspapers were published by Native Authorities or District Commissioners. Like the other district and provincial newspapers, it was written in Swahili and its circulation benefited from very high literacy rates in Moshi District.¹² But it was also different, because it came into being at a particularly momentous time in the local political history of Kilimanjaro, for its birth coincided with a local campaign to have a Paramount Chief or *Mangi Mkuu* of the Chagga, and the election of the first and last person to hold the position, Thomas Marealle.

In the late 1940s, two veteran politicians, Petro Njau and Joseph Merinyo, had returned to Kilimanjaro after a long absence and taken over the local branch of the African Association. They attacked recent constitutional reforms which had placed three divisional chiefs at the

head of local government in Moshi, and called for the appointment of a Paramount Chief. The outcome of a new round of constitutional reform was the agreement that a Paramount Chief or *Mangi Mkuu* would be popularly elected and placed above the three Divisional Chiefs. An election was held, and Merinyo and Njau put their weight behind Thomas Marealle, a colonial civil servant and grandson of a leading chief at the turn of the century. Marealle was duly elected, defeating his rivals by a considerable margin.¹³

Marealle was installed on 17 January 1952. A few months later, in September 1952, the District Commissioner for Moshi, Basil Stubbings, wrote to Marealle proposing a newspaper for Moshi District and setting out his reasons. He wrote: "With a growing and dynamic society like the Chagga, a medium of disseminating reliable information is not only advisable but essential. The written word may be misread or misinterpreted but the spoken one can be dangerously distorted and twisted to suit narrow and selfish ends. I would like to see in the new Chagga Council building, the embryo of a Chagga "public relations office" through which the suggested "Chagga newspaper" would be published."¹⁴ For Stubbings and other local officials, the newspaper promised to serve a valuable political purpose. The written word would have the authority which the oral word lacked. An authoritative local newspaper would, local officials hoped, put a stop to the rumours which had animated local politics in recent years, and create a more stable political life on the mountain.

The new Paramount Chief shared the view that this should be "strictly a "Newspaper" and not a "Views-paper"." Spelling out in more detail what he meant, Marealle made clear that "the paper will publish news in the form of reports of what actually takes place or will take place in Uchagga, and not of what should or should not take place. In other words "CRITICISM" is to be avoided as far as possible, unless such criticism is constructive."¹⁵ But if part of the purpose of the newspaper as far as local colonial officials and the new Paramount Chief were concerned lay in snuffing out a lively local politics, the paper was nevertheless, from its foundation, intensely political.

At Marealle's installation as Paramount Chief, the Governor Edward Twining announced that Marealle had been "elected by the people" in order to be "the principal mouth-piece of the Chagga people and their liaison with Government".¹⁶ But Marealle's sense of his own role was far grander than that of an intermediary, for he saw his role as that of building a Chagga nation. In his first year in office, he instituted the new public holiday of Chagga Day, to be held annually on 10 November, a day which, Marealle explained in a brochure produced to celebrate Chagga Day, represented "the historic come-together of the whole tribe".¹⁷ Marealle also commissioned a new history of the Chagga, to be written by Kathleen Stahl, and a Chagga flag was produced to fly above the new Chagga Council building.¹⁸

For Marealle, the newspaper was conceived as part of this nation-building project. But the letters exchanged between Marealle and the District Commissioner, alongside the minutes of meetings held by a committee set up to establish the newspaper, indicate a certain tension between this conception and an alternative conception of the newspaper as a space of free speech in which all could engage. There were two particular areas of controversy, of which one was language and the other was ownership.

<C> Language and ownership

Language was an important part of Marealle's wider nation-building efforts. As he explained in a letter to the District Commissioner in October 1952, he believed that "a local dialect is the very basis of tribal or national thought and there is much to be gained by preserving it."¹⁹ Yet he was concerned that owing to the distinctions between dialects of Kichagga, the language would soon die out. He envisaged appointing "a Chagga Dialect Committee composed of people from all the three Divisions with the idea of striking a happy medium between the three dialectic groupings", which would then serve as the "basis of a Chagga English Dictionary, a vocabulary and School primers."²⁰

A key question in establishing *Komkya* was therefore that of which language to use. As already mentioned, most of the district and provincial newspapers were published in Swahili, though some, like the newspaper *Lembuka* published in Tukuyu in western Tanzania also included material in the vernacular.²¹ Swahili's dominant position by 1952 led James Scotton to conclude that by this point it had "clearly become the *lingua franca* of Tanganyika".²² But it is perhaps more accurate to say that it had become the *lingua franca* of print, the result of first German and then British policies privileging Swahili as a language of administration, education and the production of literature. While there was some evidence of a demand for vernacular languages, and Horace Mason, the social development officer in the Pare district who had been responsible for the highly successful *Habari za Upare*, reported being "continually asked" why the local language Chasu was not used "as the language for the paper", this was outweighed by the demand for Swahili. Those targeted by the government's mass literacy campaign in the Pare mountains insisted that they wanted to learn to read and write Swahili, not the Pare language, because Swahili was understood to be the language of education.²³

In early discussions about the newspaper, Marealle however argued for the use of Kichagga, if not solely then at least alongside Swahili. Marealle made clear that he saw the newspaper as an opportunity to promote the Chagga language as part of his wider project of Chagga nation building. But Marealle found himself faced with opposition from local officials who turned to Horace Mason, the Pare Social Development Officer, for advice. Mason agreed with officials

in Moshi that the forces militating for Swahili were far stronger than arguments in favour of a local language. After all, “[p]resumably one of the aims of the paper will be not merely to tell the Wachagga what is happening in their country but also other people.” And there was also an acknowledgement that a territory-wide Swahiliphone public sphere already existed, and that “[o]ther papers, in particular “Mambo Leo””, relied on having access to local news in a shared language which they could reprint “for territorial circulation”.²⁴ Mason suggested as a compromise that they might include “a column of matter in Kichagga - poems, proverbs etc. so as to make quite clear that there is no deliberate intention to kill the local language”.²⁵

Faced with these arguments, Marealle retreated from his initial position on the question of language. Rather than argue for the use of Kichagga as one of the main languages of the newspaper, he now suggested simply that it “allow for some space however little of putting across the new dialect even if that space was not more than a quarter page a time”, and indeed said that it had never been his intention that Kichagga should be one of the “formal languages used”.²⁶ But if Marealle quickly changed his position on the language to be used in the newspaper, he was able to have his own way on the question of ownership against his political rivals.

A committee was set up in the autumn of 1952 to take the project forward and included the District Commissioner Basil Stubbings, and the three divisional chiefs representing the three sections of the mountain, alongside Marealle in the chair. Also on the committee was A.L.B. Bennett, European adviser to the local co-operative union, the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union or KNCU, which was responsible for marketing the coffee which was the basis of Kilimanjaro’s wealth. As such the KNCU was the leading economic force on the mountain.²⁷

It was clear from the discussions in the committee around the question of financing and control that other local leaders were concerned the newspaper would become a vehicle for Marealle to build up his own power base. When Marealle proposed setting up the newspaper directly under the auspices of the Chagga Council, both Bennett and Abdiel Shangali, one of the divisional chiefs who had stood, unsuccessfully, for election to the new position of Paramount Chief, expressed reservations. Bennett agreed that he wanted a newspaper that would set out the truth and “not contain insults or news which would hurt a person or peoples’ families”, but said that he did not want it to be run by the Chagga Council, but rather “it should be run by a company and helped by the Chagga Council until it could be self-supporting.”²⁸ Bennett went on to say that in this way “readers would not think that it was the newspaper of the Chagga Council” or feel that they did not have the freedom “to say other things on top of those which were said by the Chagga Council.” The committee met again two

weeks later, and this time Marealle had his arguments ready. He proposed that it should start out under the auspices of the Chagga Council, and be transferred to a company at a later date. He argued that if the money would in any case be coming from the Chagga Treasury, it would be dishonest to give the impression that it was owned by a company, and moreover that “because many natives do not yet know what freedom of the press means it is better that the Chagga Council supports this newspaper for the moment.”²⁹ On this occasion, Bennett and Shangali accepted the decision, so *Komkya* became a Chagga Council newspaper and remained so for the duration of its existence.

The birth of the newspaper was therefore closely linked to Marealle’s political project. Indeed, to this day the newspaper is remembered in the area as Marealle’s newspaper.³⁰ But the newspaper in fact outlasted Marealle’s fall from power. In 1960, a referendum was held to determine the future both of Marealle and of the office of Paramount Chief. Marealle and his supporters lost, and Marealle was replaced with a new President of the Chagga, Solomon Eliufoo, a leading member of TANU and son-in-law of Marealle’s rival, Abdiel Shangali. Eliufoo also made use of the newspaper, employing its columns to offer a series of reflections on political change, the meaning and practice of democracy, and the nature of virtuous conduct in politics. The paper changed its name to *Kusare* in 1961 and, following constitutional reforms in 1962, became the newspaper of the Kilimanjaro District Council rather than the now defunct Chagga Council, and in this form continued to be published until 1967.

Not only did *Komkya* survive after Marealle had departed Kilimanjaro’s political stage, even at the time when Marealle was still in power *Komkya* had an appeal which went far beyond Marealle’s political supporters. According to Helen Kitchen’s 1958 study, *Komkya*’s “content and appeal” meant that its circulation extended “beyond the districts and tribes” for whom it was initially intended.³¹ *Komkya*’s late colonial popularity, coupled with its longevity, suggests that it became more than a new Paramount Chief’s means of shoring up support.

 Komkya as a district newspaper

Komkya’s foundation was linked to the election of Thomas Marealle, but as we have suggested, the model was that of a new genre of Swahili-language district newspapers which emerged in the 1950s in Tanganyika, produced by local councils or district offices.³² These newspapers ranged widely in size, content and professionalism. Some were cyclostyled, consisted of only two sides of A4 and circulated in a small local area. At the other extreme, the broadsheet *Habari za Upare*, based at Pare Council Headquarters in Northeastern Tanganyika, extended to fourteen pages and was professionally printed, its pages filled by a team of local reporters.³³

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, district newspapers, produced by local government organisations as part of a wider project of mass education, social development and political education, have attracted little attention from historians.³⁴ In his memoir of 1950s Tanganyika, Godfrey Mwakikagile described them as an attempt by the colonial government to “undermine the nationalist cause” and to “project a good image of the government among the indigenous people.”³⁵ While the Government hoped they would develop an independent existence, they were, he suggested, encouraged “to portray the colonial rulers in a positive way” and contained “little criticism of government policies when the papers were first launched, although this changed later in a number of cases”.³⁶ Yet we should not be so quick to pigeonhole these newspapers as of interest only as tools of colonial development policy, government propaganda or precursors of a nationalist press, for in Tanganyika they rapidly became the major way in which most people outside the main urban centres encountered a newspaper. The reason for that lies in the history of the press in Tanzania.

In her 1958 volume documenting Africa’s newspapers, Helen Kitchen suggested that the Tanganyikan case had little of interest to offer those interested in African newspapers. “The limited political development of Tanganyika’s African population and the small size of the European colony”, she noted, “are reflected in the country’s newspapers, which are few in number and largely non-controversial in character.”³⁷ There was, Kitchen continued, only one “independent African paper of any consequence” which was the newspaper *Bukya na Gandi*, edited by E.R. Munseri and published in English, Haya and Swahili.³⁸ She might also have mentioned *Zuhra*, edited by R.M. Plantan in Dar es Salaam. Yet these were rare examples, for in contrast both to West Africa and to Tanganyika’s neighbours to the north, Kenya and Uganda, all with a lively independent press, Tanganyika’s public sphere was dominated by government and mission newspapers.

The colonial government was aware of this peculiarity, and in his annual report for 1952 the Public Relations Officer, G.K. Whitlamsmith, reflected on the reasons why an independent press had not developed in Tanganyika. He suggested that: “[g]eneral confidence in the Government has something to do with it, as has also the fact that the Africans of Tanganyika are less politically mature than the inhabitants of many other colonies. An additional cause may be that the inhabitants of Tanganyika have other means of expressing their discontents, such as writing petitions to the Trusteeship Council and voicing their criticisms on the local government bodies in their districts, on which the non-hereditary elements have been increasingly represented in recent years.”³⁹ In his report the following year, Whitlamsmith repeated his comments, while also suggesting that lack of “business acumen” among Tanganyikans was a possible further reason.⁴⁰

Whitlamsmith expressed his desire to foster the development of an independent press. “The establishment of a sound independent African press is essential”, he argued, “if Africans are to advance towards political maturity. Publications in which they can give vent to their feelings are a valuable safety valve and also give Government useful information on the state of public opinion.”⁴¹ But he did not discuss the significant challenges which stood in the way of such a press. When an independent press began to appear from 1952, the Government of Tanganyika acted quickly to restrict it, extending an earlier requirement that a bond be paid in respect of any newspaper published at fourteen day intervals.⁴² The level of the bond was also tripled.⁴³ A new sedition law passed in 1955 further curtailed the freedom of the press.

Yet if Tanganyika’s independent press before around 1957 was weak and stuttering, this was only true of the *independent* African press. Contained within the Public Relations Officer’s 1952 report was a hint as to another reason why an independent press had not emerged. For, it seems, some of the demand for newspapers was being met by a very particular genre, that of the district newspaper.

District newspapers had emerged after 1945, largely as a result of local initiative. They were mostly written in Swahili, and were edited by Africans with advice and support from local officials.⁴⁴ In his report for 1952, Whitlamsmith had been unable to give circulation information on these papers but by 1953, having undertaken a survey to see whether it might be possible to organise advertising centrally thus improving the financial position of the district newspapers, he was able to report the scale which these newspapers had now reached. The circulation of individual titles ranged from 300 to 3,000 a month, which produced a combined figure of 27,000. To put this in context, *Mambo Leo*, the largest selling newspaper in East Africa, was selling approximately 50,000 copies a month by the end of 1952.⁴⁵ By 1958, Helen Kitchen estimated that some of the most popular district newspapers were selling up to 5,000 copies a month.⁴⁶

The district papers were clearly reaching a wide audience, and developing an importance beyond that initially anticipated. Their roots lay in the history of post-war development in East Africa and particularly policies which aimed to expand literacy rates. This was particularly true in the case of one of the most popular district newspapers, *Habari za Upare*, which appeared for the first time in April 1951.⁴⁷ Its origins reached back to a proposal put forward by Professor C.N. Philips in 1947 for a Mass Literacy and Community Development Scheme in the Pare mountains of northern Tanganyika. One part of his proposal for community development was that a community newspaper should be established, but it quickly became apparent that a newspaper would be important for the mass literacy programme as well.⁴⁸ The social development team sent to the area found that while books

were popular with children, they were less popular with adults. Their analysis was that “Poor lighting in homes and a gregarious social life militated against the reading habit, which could only be found in adults with a background of more than ten years’ formal schooling.”⁴⁹ But if books were relatively unpopular, newspapers and magazines were in demand. A periodical produced by local people for the community thus seemed to combine community development objectives and supply much-needed follow up literature for those who had recently learned to read.

The motivation to produce *Habari za Upare* may well have been social development, but it rapidly became a very different proposition. Initially produced by the Social Development Officer and his team using stencils and a typewriter, the printing was soon handed over to the KNCU printing works in Moshi. In 1954 an African editor employed by the local authority took over. Reflecting on the ways in which the newspaper had changed in the first six years of its existence in 1957, Horace Mason concluded that *Habari za Upare* had evolved from being “an instrument of development” to the “organ of a local government body, combining the dissemination of accurate local news and general interest reading matter with the publicizing of local government activities”, its running costs funded by commercial advertising.⁵⁰ With a circulation of 3,000 copies every month, around ten percent of which went to Pare working away from the district, the newspaper had, Mason concluded, succeeded in appealing to a significant reading public, which included both those outside the district who “want to be informed about progress at home and news of their friends” and those at home who were interested less “in the minutiae of local news, but more in the overall development picture of the district and news of the territory as a whole and of the outside world.”⁵¹

Habari za Upare had gone far beyond the initial aims of its founders, but its rapid progress was typical of Tanganyika’s district newspapers in general. In his report for 1955, the new Director of Public Relations, K.B.A. Dobson, remarked that they were “quite a feature of this country and, when the adverse circumstances under which they work is taken into consideration, they reflect credit on their promoters and editors”.⁵² If the editors of district newspapers were deserving of credit, this credit was rarely publicly given, for their identities were largely concealed: and here lies one of the crucial differences between Tanganyika’s district newspapers and the independent vernacular newspapers in other parts of East Africa. As Dobson explained, the excellent work done by the editors of government newspapers was performed “in the traditional cloak of editorial anonymity”.⁵³ The editor was anonymous and also, as we shall see, at least to some extent non-partisan.

Editorial anonymity serves to distinguish this genre of newspapers from many of the projects discussed in this volume. In many other cases explored here, the editor *was* the newspaper.

Editors used their newspapers as a tool to perform political and cultural work, advocating political causes, imposing new cultural forms, even disciplining language through the regularisation of orthography. But while there was an editorial line in *Komkya*, it was less closely tied to a named individual.

District newspapers were, of course published under the watchful eye of the colonial state and were therefore subject to the discipline of that state. African editors who published material which the colonial state found too oppositional or simply too political were swiftly dismissed, as in 1959 when the Lushoto newspaper *Kinyeme* published an edition including a long speech by one of TANU's leading figures, Rashidi Kawawa.⁵⁴ Power thus continued to lie with those who produced, financed and censored district newspapers, but in the absence of a named editorial voice, that power was more diffuse than in other newspapers, opening the newspaper up to be appropriated by different people and different groups. We can almost see agency lying with the form of the newspaper itself, with the newspaper acting as a forum through which new virtual communities could be created.

 Virtual communities and Chagga publics

If newspapers could serve to call into being a virtual community, this was a particular type of community. It was unstable, porous, and characterised by tension and conflict as much as by unity. In his account of the publics created by and through texts, Michael Warner explores the tensions inherent in such publics. They are both inclusionary and exclusionary: inclusionary in that anyone can become a member simply through the act of picking up and engaging with the text, and exclusionary in that not everyone has access to the language used in the text or the codes it employs. They are also a "relation among strangers" in which membership has a hidden dimension to it: no one can ever know exactly who is a member at any one time.⁵⁵

Warner's explanation of the hidden rules of the publics with which we are so familiar is helpful in directing us towards the workings of *Komkya*. If textual publics are simultaneously both inclusive and exclusionary, *Komkya*'s public was no different. Anyone who could read Swahili could, by virtue of picking up a newspaper or writing to the letters' page, become a member of this public. But those who engaged with the newspaper and employed its pages often addressed a group which was imagined to be bounded, and did so by explicitly addressing a Chagga public.

When correspondents to *Komkya* began their letters by expressing a desire to communicate with their "fellow Wachagga", they rhetorically called an imagined Chagga public into being, which could, in theory, encompass all Chagga. They drew on a long tradition of print culture on the slopes of Kilimanjaro, and earlier newspapers and periodicals such as the KNCU's

Uremi which had similarly conjured a Chagga public into being.⁵⁶ Yet the publics which *Komkya* created were both larger and smaller than this suggests. They were larger, because the newspaper was published in Swahili and sent by post across Tanganyika and Kenya. *Komkya*'s potential readership therefore stretched far beyond a linguistically, spatially or politically defined Chagga community. But they were also smaller, because the newspaper was a forum open only to those literate in Swahili and those able and willing to adopt the newspaper's own vernaculars. These dynamics of inclusion and exclusion meant that while on the one hand *Komkya* created an imagined community of all Chagga, this was not one unified body but a set of multiple and overlapping networks that were always in formation and never stable.

<C> Vernaculars of progress

As Warner reminds us, publics have their own vernaculars. *Komkya* had its own vernacular in the sense that the editorial line committed the newspaper to an over-arching narrative of progress towards enlightenment. The newspaper's title, *Chagga Dawn*, was employed by correspondents as a metaphor for this transition from darkness into light, suggesting that the Chagga people were leaving a state of ignorance and entering enlightenment.⁵⁷ While readers might disagree about what exactly constituted enlightened behaviour and how to get there, participating in *Komkya*'s pages meant accepting this as a goal and this code of membership framed their contributions.

In September 1953, *Komkya*'s editor intervened in a lively debate taking place in its pages over the questions of bridewealth and female circumcision. In an editorial entitled "Customs and Traditions" [*Mila na Jadi*], the editor summarised the contributions received thus far as representing the dissatisfaction felt by a new generation at the argument made by their parents that these practices should continue to be followed simply because they had always been followed. But, the editor asked, what did the parents think? Why were they not writing to *Komkya* themselves, and did this reluctance to intervene in *Komkya*'s pages indicate that they in fact agreed with the younger generation?⁵⁸

While this direct editorial invitation did draw a response from the older generation, in general the pages of *Komkya* were indeed dominated by the young and by the self-consciously progressive. When conservative voices appeared, the conventions of the newspaper demanded that they frame their arguments within the same overarching commitment to progress. In 1955, a controversy emerged between a neo-traditionalist political party led by Petro Njau, the veteran activist who had campaigned for a Paramount Chief, and the Lutheran Church. Njau's party called for the reinstitution of a practice whereby land disputes were settled by swearing an oath. The Lutheran Church was fundamentally opposed to any return to what it

understood to be a pagan practice. One supporter of Njau's position wrote to *Komkya* in support, but tellingly did so not in terms of a generic defence of tradition but by employing arguments drawn from global comparisons, in much the same way as the younger generation drew on examples from elsewhere to advocate the abandonment of traditions. He began his letter by saying that the Lutheran rejection of the oath should not pass without comment from those who supported the oath. "All tribes in the world", he wrote, "are governed by various traditions, and not only in Africa, but also in Asia, Europe, Australia and so on." The Chagga should therefore think carefully before throwing out their traditions.⁵⁹

<C> Shadow publics

Yet within this encompassing vernacular of progress lay further lines of demarcation. The active readership, in the sense of those who participated in the letters pages and employed *Komkya* as a public forum, was overwhelmingly weighted towards the young, educated and male. This fitted the profile of the imagined reader, suggested by the tendency for readers to specifically address "our parents" or "the elders" or "Chagga girls" when an alternative perspective was required.

Yet there were other spaces within the newspapers where alternative forms of sociality were constructed. As in other district newspapers, such as *Habari za Upare*, there was a specific "Women's page" which very quickly became a space in which matters such as women's inheritance rights, girls' education and female circumcision were debated and argued over. Letters on these subjects were often written by women, yet not exclusively so. At times young men wrote in to support the position taken by a female correspondent, at other times they wrote to disagree.

The contrast between the main letters' page and the women's page is suggested by looking at the example of an issue from December 1954. The main letters' page included one letter from a male reader worrying about girls wearing make-up, and another, also from a male reader, expressing concerns about girls going to live in town. In both cases, the imagined readers appeared to be fellow men. In contrast, the "Women's page" was taken up in that issue by a long letter from a female reader about the need for more educational opportunities for women in the district, part of an ongoing discussion of women's education which took place on that page.⁶⁰ This domain of female sociality within *Komkya* was not oppositional, but emerged in the interstices of the newspaper. Thus if the dominant mode of sociality created in *Komkya*'s pages connected the young, male and educated, *Komkya* also served to constitute alternative or shadow publics.

The same was true in relation to political divides. The official editorial line was one of neutrality and ongoing political conflicts in the district were rarely discussed openly. In July 1955, the editor announced that there would be a special series on famous people, but specified that politicians would not be included because to do so would suggest that *Komkya* favoured one side or the other.⁶¹ But at times letters hinted at conflicts behind the scenes. One example emerged in the spring and summer of 1955, as criticism of the Paramount Chief was mounting. A letter published in the 15 August 1955 issue suggested that *Komkya* was little read in a particular administrative district associated with opposition to Marealle. While this reading was rebutted by other correspondents, another letter complained about the unequal distribution of resources between the three major administrative sections of the district.⁶² The response of the editor was to reiterate the common refrain that “unity is strength”, and indeed it was unity which the newspaper preferred to stress; but it could never entirely hide deep political divisions present behind the scenes.

<C> Print, language and space

Print had the power to travel across distance and this too served both to include and to exclude. The novelty and value of print and the form of the newspaper lay in part in its ability to connect those Chagga living in Moshi and on the slopes of Kilimanjaro both with each other and with those living far away from home. If the Pare newspaper, *Habari za Upare*, sold about ten percent of its copies by post, the number of letters with addresses in other parts of Tanganyika or in Kenya suggest that a similar if not greater proportion of *Komkya* readers were outside the district.

Yet correspondents often drew a distinction between those Chagga living in “Chaggaland” [Uchaggani] and those who were away from the district. While *Komkya*’s ability to bring both groups together was celebrated, there were also limits to the ability of *Komkya* to transcend these divides. On 15 September 1954, the Paramount Chief reported in the pages of *Komkya* on progress towards the development of a new Chagga national song. The song had, he wrote, been discussed in the Chagga Council, in all the chiefs’ barazas on the mountain as well as in *Komkya*. The resulting song was set out underneath his letter, both in Kichagga and in a Swahili translation. Readers were called upon to study the words carefully, and to remember that it would forever be their national song, just as in South Africa the song “Tusekelele Afrika” was known everywhere and understood to be the song of the “whole nation”.⁶³ The problem for readers living far away was that *Komkya* had supplied the words but not the tune. One reader, R.Y. Lyimo, wrote from Malindi on the Kenyan coast to ask how those living far away could find out the tune to accompany the words. Would it, he asked, be possible to make a gramophone recording so that they too could learn the song?⁶⁴ At other times the

complaint was more practical. Each issue of *Komkya* contained a crossword puzzle but, one reader complained, the deadline for entries did not leave enough time for readers who lived far away to receive their copies, complete the crossword and send back their solutions.⁶⁵

At other times, readers living in Moshi district suggested that those who had moved away had lost touch with local realities. In 1957, a correspondent named E. Solomon Z. Kaale who gave his address as Mombasa wrote to ask why the newspaper's title was in the Chagga language but the content was in Swahili. This was, he suggested, akin to mixing salt and sugar. Surely a Chagga newspaper should be written in the Chagga language? *Komkya*, he pointed out, was sold across East Africa, but he suspected it would not be bought if potential purchasers thought it was written in the Chagga language.⁶⁶ Responding, Theophil J.S. Anthony suggested that Kaale had been away too long and forgotten that there was no unified Chagga language.⁶⁷ Amending Kaale's metaphor, Anthony suggested it was less a case of sugar mixed with salt and more a case of butter added to bread – the Chagga name sent out a signal but also allowed the Chagga to showcase their progress across East Africa.

One of the paradoxes of late colonial Tanganyika was that new ethnic patriotisms were developed in the *lingua franca* of Swahili.⁶⁸ As a result, Chagga reflected on their own nation, its past, present and future, in a language shared with others in East Africa. *Komkya* was a space in which Chagga defined themselves to the outside world, and reflected publicly on how they appeared. As *Komkya*'s first editorial reminded readers, the newspaper would travel far beyond the mountain, and would "visit many places in Tanganyika and in East Africa." The words printed and the ideas exchanged in the pages of *Komkya* would be seen by other peoples, who could make judgements about the level of progress achieved by the Chagga.⁶⁹ At the same time, those Chagga who were not literate in Swahili could not read *Komkya*.

 Conclusion

Thomas Marealle had hoped that a newspaper would shore up support behind him and create a unified Chagga people under his leadership. That it did not do so was partly a function of the format of the district newspaper and the fact that it could not be explicitly partisan. But it was also because of the nature of print. Nobody was entirely in control of this space, in which, to a certain degree, print took on a life of its own. *Komkya* provided a virtual space for debate and disagreement, while also excluding those who were not literate in Swahili or did not subscribe to an ideology of "progress". As we have seen, *Komkya* created new publics, but these publics were unstable and experienced in different ways, at different times, by different members. In this way, *Komkya* perhaps had more in common with the electronic media of today than with the campaigning newspapers of the 1950s.

Exploring *Komkya* through this analytical lens, not as a tool of identity formation but as a virtual community in flux, offers a powerful example of the role which newspapers could play in creating new and distinctive modes of late colonial sociality. But reading the newspaper in this way also serves as a way into the intellectual history of late colonial Africa. Networks of print constituted one way in which ideas were formed, worked out and argued over. It reminds us that readers and writers were members of multiple networks, which at times reinforced and at times contradicted each other. This is precisely what made life difficult for those political entrepreneurs who sought to discipline their followers, both before and after independence. But it is also what makes the close study of late colonial newspapers so important.

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- ¹ On the late colonial development initiatives referred to as the 'second colonial occupation', see D. A. Low and J.M. Lonsdale, 'Introduction: Towards the New Order 1945-1963' in D.A. Low and Alison Smith, eds., *History of East Africa*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 1-63.
- ² For a helpful critique, see Stephanie Newell, *Power to name: a history of anonymity in colonial West Africa* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 47-49.
- ³ See for example Francis P. Kasoma, "The role of the independent media in Africa's change to democracy," *Media, Culture and Society* 17 no. 4 (1995): 537-555.
- ⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 24; Benedict Anderson, *Spectre of Comparison: Nationalism, South East Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 29-45.

- ⁵ Pheng Cheah, "Grounds of Comparison," in *Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson*, ed. Jonathan Culler and Pheng Cheah (London: Routledge, 2003), 6-7.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 6
- ⁷ Karin Barber, *The anthropology of texts, persons and publics: oral and written culture in Africa and beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 145.
- ⁸ Tony Ballantyne, "Thinking local: knowledge, sociability and community in Gore's intellectual life, 1875-1914," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 44, no. 2 (2010): 138.
- ⁹ Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 50.
- ¹⁰ Issues of *Komkya* from 1953, 54, 55, 59, 60 and 61, and *Kusare* from 1961, 62, 63, 65, 66 and 67 can be consulted in the East Africana Collection of the University of Dar es Salaam. Issues of *Kusare* from 1962, 63, 64 and 67 are available on microfilm at the Library of Congress, Washington DC.
- ¹¹ See *Habari za Upare*, August 1952, Tanzania National Archives [hereafter TNA] 41176, f. 519.
- ¹² Joel Millonzi cites United Nations figures suggesting that literacy rates among the Chagga people of Moshi district were 'close to 100 percent' by 1958. Joel Carl Millonzi, *Citizenship in Africa: The Role of Adult Education in the Political Socialization of Tanganyikans, 1891-1961* (Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1975), 86.
- ¹³ Susan G. Rogers, "Search for Political Focus on Kilimanjaro: A history of Chagga politics, 1916-1952, with special reference to the cooperative movement and indirect rule," PhD diss., University of Dar es Salaam, 1972.
- ¹⁴ Letter from District Commissioner to Mangi Mkuu, 19 September 1952, TNA 5/10/21, f. 1.
- ¹⁵ "New Paper for the Wachagga: Notes." No date, TNA 5/10/21, f. 10.
- ¹⁶ G. K. Whitlamsmith, *Recent Trends in Chagga Political Development* (Moshi: KNCU Printing Press, 1955), n. p.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, n. p.
- ¹⁸ "Two Tusks from Kilimanjaro," *Tanganyika Standard*, cited in Whitlamsmith, *Recent Trends in Chagga Political Development*, n.p.
- ¹⁹ Letter from Mangi Mkuu to District Commissioner, Moshi, 20 October 1952, TNA 5/10/21, f. 6.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Martin Sturmer, *The Media History of Tanzania* (n.p.: Ndanda Mission Press, 1998), 64.
- ²² James F. Scotton, "Tanganyika's African Press, 1937-1960: A Nearly Forgotten Pre-Independence Forum," *African Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (1978), 8.
- ²³ Horace Mason, "Pare News and other publications of the Pare mass literacy and community development scheme," *Reports and Papers on Mass Communication: Periodicals for new literates: seven case histories*, 24 (1957), 19. With the dominance of a *lingua franca*, Tanganyika's print culture had more in common with northern Nigeria where similar steps had been taken to promote Hausa as a language of administration and literature, and which had a vibrant Hausa language press, than with its East African neighbours. In Kenya, there was a lively Kikuyu and Luo language press, and in Buganda a Luganda press. See James F. Scotton, "Growth of the vernacular press in colonial East Africa: patterns of government control," PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971; Fay Gadsden, "The African Press in Kenya, 1945-1952," *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 4 (1980), 515-535.
- ²⁴ Letter from Horace Mason, "Chagga Newspaper," 31 October 1952, TNA 5/10/21, f. 14.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Letter from Mangi Mkuu to District Commissioner, Moshi, 20 October 1952, TNA 5/10/21, f. 6.
- ²⁷ Letter from Mangi Mkuu to A.L.B. Bennett, 28 November 1952, TNA 5/10/21 f. 17. Bennett had been a leading figure on Kilimanjaro since 1932 when he was appointed manager to the newly re-organised co-operative society. He had married a Chagga woman and spoke the Chagga language and as such was firmly embedded in local society. Sally Falk Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications: "Customary" law on Kilimanjaro, 1880-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 124.
- ²⁸ Kumbukumbu za Mkutano wa Gazeti la Wachagga Uliofanyika Chagga Council Tarekh 3.12.52 [Minutes of a meeting concerning the Chagga Newspaper held at the Chagga Council, 3 December 1952], TNA 5/10/21, f. 20. All translations are my own.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 29.
- ³⁰ In a discussion on an internet forum in June 2011 one participant recalled that Marealle's "government ran a newspaper at that time which was called "Komkya".
www.jamiiforums.com/habari-na-hoja-mchanganyiko/146471-ukoo-wa-marealle-waandamwa-na-dhambi-ya-kupenda-madaraka-2.html. Accessed 31.12.2013
- ³¹ Helen Kitchen, ed., *The Press in Africa* (Washington D.C.: Ruth Sloan Associates Inc., 1958), 38fn.

- ³² Sturmer, *Media History*, 64. *Komkya* had its offices in the town's impressive new Chagga Council buildings. 'Two Tusks from Kilimanjaro', *Tanganyika Standard*, reprinted in Whitlamsmith, *Recent Trends in Chagga Political Development*, viii.
- ³³ Scotton, "Tanganyika's Vernacular Press," 8. Copies of *Habari za Upare* are preserved in TNA 41176.
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- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ³⁷ Kitchen, *Press in Africa*, 36.
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- ⁴¹ Tanganyika, *Public relations department, 1952*, 4.
- ⁴² Sturmer, *Media History*, 74.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 74.
- ⁴⁴ Government of Tanganyika, *Annual report of the public relations department, 1955* (Dar es Salaam: Government of Tanganyika, 1956), 4.
- ⁴⁵ Tanganyika, *Public relations department, 1952*, 2.
- ⁴⁶ Kitchen, *Press in Africa*, 36.
- ⁴⁷ Mason, "Pare News," 19.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁵² Tanganyika, *Public relations department, 1955*, 4.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4. On pseudonymity see Newell, *Power to Name*.
- ⁵⁴ D.C Lushoto to Provincial Public Relations Officer, Tanga, FCO 141/17949, f. 74, 9 May 1959.
- ⁵⁵ Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 55.
- ⁵⁶ On which see Emma Hunter, "'In pursuit of the higher medievalism': local history and politics in Kilimanjaro" *Recasting the Past: history writing and political work in modern Africa* edited by Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 155. Cf. Karin Barber, 'I.B. Akinyele and Early Yoruba Print Culture' in *ibid.*, 31-49.
- ⁵⁷ A letter which appeared in the Women's Page in November 1953 employed this contrast between 'darkness' or 'ignorance' [*gizani*], and *komkya* to good effect to complain about people who risked their lives by failing to go to hospital until it was too late and instead relying on traditional medicine. Letter from M. Waryaurangiso Elisaa, *Komkya*, November 1953, 7.
- ⁵⁸ Editorial, "Mila na Jadi," *Komkya*, September 1953, 2.
- ⁵⁹ Letter from A.E. Kimambo, *Komkya*, 1 November 1955, 3.
- ⁶⁰ The term used was "Uchagga" or Chaggaland.
- ⁶¹ Editorial, "Watu Mashuhuri," *Komkya*, 15 July 1955, 2.
- ⁶² Letter from Mwl. M. Sh. J. Shuma, *Komkya*, 15 October 1955, 3.
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- ⁶⁷ Letter from Theosophil, "Lugha ya 'Komkya,'" *Komkya*, 15 March 1957, 3.
- ⁶⁸ John Lonsdale, 'Anti-colonial nationalism and patriotism in Sub-Saharan Africa' in *Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* edited by John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 318-340; Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935-1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- ⁶⁹ Editorial, *Komkya*, March 1954, 2. This was a regular theme in colonial newspapers, see for example Barber, *Print Culture*, 48, and Rebecca Jones, "The Sociability of Print: 1920s and 30s Lagos Newspaper Travel Writing," this volume.